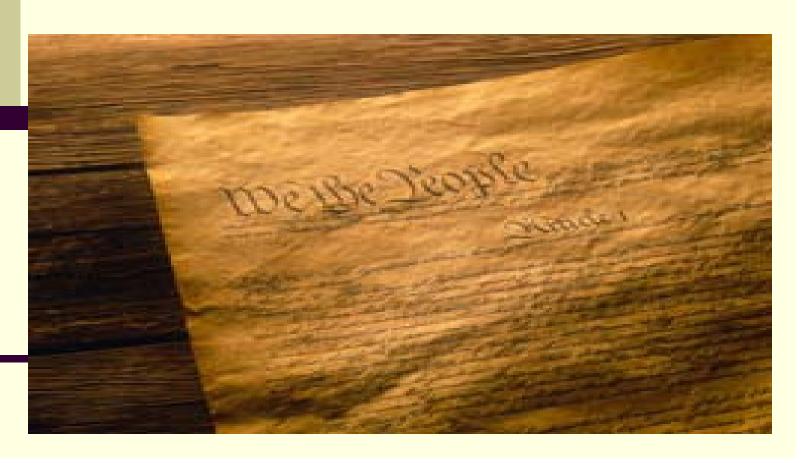
# United States Constitution



### Our Constitution

- 220 years old
- Framework for government
- Oldest and shortest written National Constitution
- Preamble, 7 Articles (sections)
- Living Document
  - An outline of government
    - Outlines how current government can create, enforce, and evaluate legislation
      - Does not create legislation
  - Can be changed to meet changing times
    - Amended 27 times

### Preamble

- Introduction
- "We the People..."
  - Establishes Popular Sovereignty
  - Written by Gouverneur Morris
- Lists purposes of document
  - Form a more perfect union
  - Establish justice
  - Ensure domestic tranquility
  - Provide for common defense
  - Promote the general welfare
  - Ensure the blessings of liberty

### Article I

#### Legislative Branch

- Divides into 2 houses
  - House of Representatives and Senate
    - Qualifications for Reps, Senators
- Lists powers of congress
- Responsibilities of each house
- Outlines legislative procedure
  - How laws are made
- Sets some guidelines for Congress



### Article II



- Executive Branch
  - Creates office of the President, Vice President
    - Qualifications, terms, and removal.
  - Describes procedures for electing the President
  - Lists powers and duties of the President

## Article III

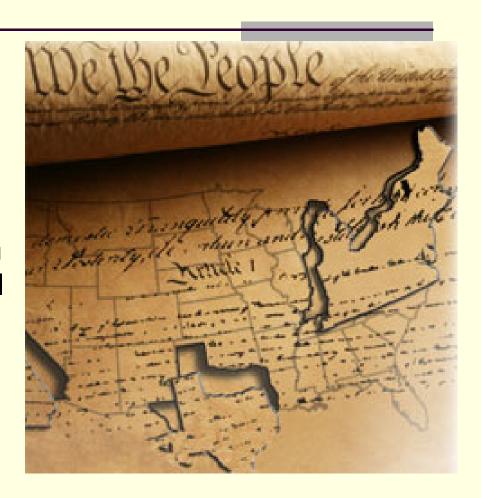


- Judicial Branch
  - Establishes a Court system
    - A Supreme Court
      - Outlines its jurisdiction –what cases it can hear
    - Charges Congress with establishing lower federal courts

### Article IV

#### Federalism

- Describes the relationship between states and with the Central Government
- Guarantees a republican form of government in all states
- Allows Congress to admit new states



### Article V

- Amending the Constitution
  - Hard to change, but not too hard
    - 2/3 of both houses of Congress
    - Ratified by 3/4 of the states
    - Out of 11,000 amendments proposed to Congress, only 33 have been sent to the States for ratification
  - 27 amendments to date

### Article VI

- Constitutional Supremacy
  - Establishes the Constitution as the "Supreme Law of the land"
    - National laws always trump state laws
    - Gives the Central Government power over the states
    - Unlike the Articles of Confederation

### Article VII

- Ratification
  - Requires 9 states to ratify in order for the Constitution to go into effect



# Key Principals in the Constitution

- Creates a <u>Democratic Republic</u>
  - Has elements of both styles of government
    - Republic when people elect representatives to make decisions for them
    - Democracy when everyone has a vote in decisions made
- Creates a <u>Federal</u> Government power is divided and shared between state and national governments
  - Other types
    - Confederate sovereign states delegate power to a national government for specific purposes
    - Unitary All power is concentrated in a national government
- When we are talking about the U.S. government, the terms Federal Government, Central Government, and National Government are interchangeable
  - They all refer to our government in Washington, DC that makes laws and decisions for the entire country.

## Separation of Powers

#### Separation of Powers

- At the national level—dividing up the powers and responsibilities in government so there is no one group (or person) who makes all the decisions
  - Legislative Branch makes laws
  - Executive Branch enforces laws
  - Judicial Branch interprets laws
- Federalism—divides the powers between the national and state governments
  - Reserved to the states
  - Delegated to the national government
  - Concurrent (shared) by the states and the national government

### Checks and Balances

■ <u>Checks and Balances</u> — ways in which one branch of government limits the powers of another branch, keeping any one branch from becoming too powerful

"Ambition should be matched with ambition"

James Madison